

Message Text

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ORIGIN MBFR-04

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

PM-07 NSC-10 SS-15 RSC-01 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00

SAJ-01 PA-03 PRS-01 ACDA-19 L-03 TRSE-00 NEA-10 /110 R

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OJCS-J-R:WGEORGI (INFORMED)

NSC:WHYLAND(SUBSTANCE)

ACDA:DLINEBAUGH(SUBSTANCE)

PM/DCA:VBAKER

EUR/RPM:ESTREATOR

S/S O: RMRIGHT

OSD/PA:JFRIEDHEIM

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O R 050138Z SEP 73

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USMISSION NATO IMMEDIATE

INFO SECDEF

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 175934

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS:PARM,NATO

SUBJECT:MBFR:STATEMENTS BY SECDEF

REF: USNATO 4109

1. SECRETARY SCHLESINGER WAS INVITED TO AND ATTENDED A BREAKFAST MEETING 30 AUGUST WITH ABOUT 20 SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE WASHINGTON PRESS CORPS WHICH HAS BEEN CORRECTLY REPORTED IN SO FAR AS IT HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS A WIDE-RANGING, HOUR-LONG QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION. THERE IS NO VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT OF THIS MEETING. FYI. THE MICHAEL GETLER ARTICLE IS A FAIRLY ACCURATE REPORT. END FYI.

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2. BY WAY OF SUMMARIZING THE ARTICLES,

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE STRONGLY DEFENDED THE DEFENSE BUDGET DURING THIS SESSION AND WARNED AGAINST INCORRECT INTERPRETATIONS OF POSSIBLE DETENTE. IN PARTICULAR HE POINTED TO SOVIET IMPROVEMENTS IN THEIR ACTIVE FORCES AT THE SAME TIME THAT THEY ESPOUSED A POLICY OF DETENTE WITH THE WEST. WITH REGARD TO MBFR, SECRETARY SCHLESINGER SAID THAT U.S. POLICY SOUGHT BALANCED REDUCTIONS, AND HE DISCUSSED THE ASYMMETRIES THAT WOULD BE ASSOCIATED WITH U.S. TROOP WITHDRAWALS FROM THE CONTINENT AS OPPOSED TO SOVIET MOVEMENT OF FORCES BACK ACROSS THE BORDERS OF THE SOVIET UNION. IN THAT CONTEXT, THE SECRETARY STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF U.S. STRATEGIC MOBILITY FORCES WHICH MUST BE MAINTAINED OR IMPROVED IF WE ARE SERIOUSLY TO CONSIDER

REDUCTIONS IN CENTRAL EUROPE. HE WARNED THAT THE U.S. COULD FIND ITSELF IN A WEAKENED NEGOTIATING POSTURE UNLESS IT KEPT ITS MILITARY BUDGET AND MANPOWER STRONG. HE INDICATED THAT U.S. MOBILITY RESOURCES GAVE IT THE OPPORTUNITY TO COPE WITH SOVIET FORCES AND WARNED THAT NOTHING SHOULD BE DONE TO REDUCE ADVANTAGES WE HOLD IN THAT AREA TODAY.

3. SECRETARY SCHLESINGER DID NOT STATE OR IMPLY THAT THE U.S. AND ITS ALLIES WOULD NOT CALL FOR A SOVIET REDUCTION WHICH WAS NOT QUANTITATIVELY LARGER THAN A U.S. REDUCTION. NEITHER DID THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE SUGGEST PERCENTAGE CUTS WHICH DID NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT CURRENT IMBALANCES AND ASYMMETRIES. TO THE CONTRARY, HE STRESSED THE NEED TO BE ABLE TO RETURN U.S. FORCES TO EUROPE RAPIDLY DURING A TIME OF CRISIS IN ORDER TO MODERATE THE RISKS INHERENT IN ANY REDUCTION AND THUS INCREASE THE CHANCES FOR SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATIONS IN A PERIOD WHEN THE SOVIET UNION STILL MAINTAINED QUOTE A MAILED FIST ENCASED IN THE VELVET GLOVE OF DETENTE UNQUOTE. IN THAT CONTEXT AND IN RESPONSE TO A HYPOTHETICAL QUESTION FROM ONE OF THE REPORTERS, SECRETARY SCHLESINGER DID NOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE U.S. MIGHT NOT INSIST ON UNEQUAL PERCENTAGE CUTS.

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4. GETLER ARTICLE SAID THE FOLLOWING IN REGARD TO MBFR:

QUOTE ON NATO, SCHLESINGER SAID THAT IF THE SOVIETS BELIEVED THEIR 'TOTAL RELATIONSHIP' WITH THE UNITED STATES 'WOULD BE BENEFITTED BY A SINCERE DISCUSSION' OF MUTUAL AND BALANCED FORCE REDUCTIONS IN EUROPE, THE DISCUSSIONS WHICH ARE TO OPEN ON OCT. 30 COULD LEAD TO SIGNIFICANT

TROOP PULLBACKS ON BOTH SIDES.

HE SAID U.S. POLICY IS STILL TO SEEK BALANCED REDUCTIONS, WHICH HAS GENERALLY IMPLIED A LARGER SOVIET WITHDRAWAL TO COMPENSATE FOR THE SMALLER AMERICAN FORCES AND THE FACT THAT SOME U.S. TROOPS WOULD BE WITHDRAWN ACROSS THE ATLANTIC.

IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, HOWEVER, HE SAID 'IT IS POSSIBLE' THAT THE UNITED STATES MIGHT NOT INSIST ON AN UNEQUAL PERCENTAGE CUT TO OFFSET THESE FACTORS.

IN DOING SO, SCHLESINGER STRESSED THAT HE WAS 'DAMNED INTERESTED IN MOBILITY.' HE POINTED OUT THAT THE 'SOVIETS HAVE LESSER TRANSPORTATION CAPABILITIES THAN THE UNITED

STATES AND THEY STILL HAVE TO COME A SIGNIFICANT DISTANCE' TO GET BACK TO A CENTRAL EUROPEAN BATTLEFIELD.

THE DEFENSE CHIEF STRESSED THE SUBSTANTIAL AMERICAN AIR-LIFT CAPABILITY AND SEEMED TO BE SUGGESTING THAT SOME FURTHER BEEF-UP IN RAPID AIR OR SEALIFT CAPABILITY, AS A MEANS TO QUICKLY REINFORCE, MAY BE PART OF A U.S. OPTION TO EVENTUALLY WITHDRAW SOME FORCES FROM EUROPE. END QUOTE.

5. YOU SHOULD DRAW ON THE ABOVE IN RESPONDING TO PRESS QUERIES, TO THE BELGIAN REQUEST OUTLINED IN REFTTEL, AND IN ADDRESSING THE MATTER IF IT IS RAISED IN THE NAC.

6. TEXT OF GETLER ARTICLE FOLLOWS SEPTTEL.

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